

Critical Practice is a self-governing cluster of artists, researchers and academics, hosted by Chelsea College of Art and Design. We aim to encourage and engage critical practice within art, the field of culture, and organization. This is issue 2 of our annual publication.

<http://www.criticalpracticechelsea.org>

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Front cover: Critical Practice spidergram courtesy of Marsha.

Back cover: Vocabulaboratories Coordinated by Marsha, co-authored by Cinzia, Michaela and Marsha

### A Brechtian introduction

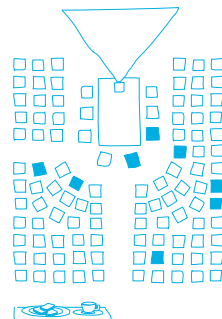
As part of Disclosures, an event organised by Gasworks in London, Critical Practice was invited to contribute to The View From Here: after Open Congress, Saturday 29th March 2008.

Critical Practice was asked to address specific issues:

*The speakers will introduce the basis of their project and describe their own position within it. They will also outline where the project has taken its cue from, from the perspective of recent media and contemporary art history. Led by Marina Vishmidt, the discussion that follows will attempt to outline questions that were yet unresolved at the end of the described projects, with particular scrutiny on the involvement of contemporary art institutions and methodologies.*

This offered a great opportunity to reflect on the genealogy of Critical Practice - and what we might want to do now.

The Social Relations working group discussed how to respond; as the representation of group, collective and collaborative practices (open or otherwise) is a constituent issue for Critical Practice, we decided upon a Brechtian multi-voiced presentation.



# Part One: beginnings

Ian and Trevor referred back to the Chelsea Wiki as part of the history of Open Congress.



**Slide 1.** To talk about the basis for Open Congress it's necessary to think back to 2004. Open source software was beginning to prove itself on the desktop in the form of Firefox, and Wikipedia was beginning to show how large-scale, open collaborative practice could produce valuable knowledge.



**Slide 2.** Blogs, torrents, peer-to-peer networks, email, mobile

phones. There's unlimited access to other peoples stuff, people are seemingly giving away their creative content (and other people's).

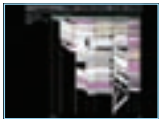


**Slide 3.** This activity, both generous and piratical, was at

odds with less free proprietary models of production and distribution. Lawyer Lawrence Lessig was revealing how the law was frantically trying to contain the cultural shift of 'Free Culture'.



**Slide 4.** We believe art institutions were, and still are, struggling with their relationship to these changes. They have the habit of nurturing apparent uniqueness within the cultural continuum.



**Slide 5.** Studying on the Fine Art BA at Chelsea College of Art, we felt all at odds with the University's treatment of students - still very much focused on the individual. If collaboration took place, it was someone's responsibility to pick it apart; the examiner, student or tutor.



**Slide 6.** Why is there such a bias toward the individual? The reluctance to support non-individual practice is difficult to accept - it is not for lack of theory. Confounded by theorist Nicholas Bourriaud, many of our peers separated curation and 'post production' from their work as artists.



**Slide 7.** The wider cultural and technological climate provided a lot of impetus for collaboration.



**Slide 8.** We were interested in exploring whether a notion of collaboration could

extend to art and community. Were people willing to risk what they could achieve on their own in favour of working on something less tangible with other people? We wanted to take this a step further and ask 'What would a peer-led degree show look and feel like?' That is - one that did not attempt to mask the informal and fluid exchange of ideas between students on the course, tutors, the building and the world at large (!)

## Contents

### \* 1 The form of the presentation

A slide show covering each of the four issues we were asked to address, each slide 20 seconds, each issue 15 sides.

- o 1.1 Part One: beginnings
- o 1.2 Neil and Corrado talk briefly about Open Congress itself
- o 1.3 Marsha and Michaela address the historicisation of Open Congress, and the emergence of Critical Practice
- o 1.4 Cinzia and Robin address the most recent phase of Critical Practice, in relationship to art institutions

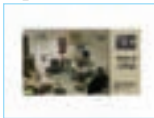


Slide 9. We started, as all well-meaning open art practices do, with some meetings to gauge interest and discuss ideas. We set up the chelseawiki - intended to build upon the general open vibe in the year group. The wiki became a site for minutes, lectures, notes, theses, photographs of art works... In part it was a response against Blackboard, the institutions own virtual, proprietary 'learning' environment.



Slide 10. The wiki was obviously a powerful tool, but it didn't work for

everyone. A barrier to some was the fact that all content placed on it was licensed under the General Public License. However, for those that understood its implications, they realised it helped to cement and record the collaboration and emergent practices between us.

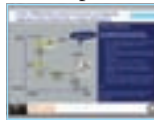


Slide 11. Come April 2005, with theses completed (of course, available on the wiki), we were now concentrating on putting theory into practice in the form of the degree show. Uncomfortable with the easy

container of 'a group' we observed a business tradition of initials - first names though :-)



Slide 12. After much talk we, Darrel\_Ian\_Tom\_Trevor\_Wei-Ho (DITTW), wrote a set of Founding Principles describing what was commonly held to be important in an 'open' approach to art practice.



Slide 13. Actually, when it came to scaling our activities it became clear that our openness was false - our principles and decisions were heavily codified. We were encouraged to unpick our informal 'clan' values

and negotiate a common language with our new partners (a group of first year helpers).



Slide 14. The degree show was a fantastic affair, with a mess of ideas and activities encompassing social spaces with free internet access, gallery activities for families, children and college staff, a seminar, even an Open Congress meeting...



Slide 15. It was important that this was collaboratively authored, and that we

were confident in making the various relationships explicit within the work. For those interested, the wiki provided the background.



Slide 16. Around this time, some of the staff at Chelsea were floating the idea of

Open Congress. The congress seemed a good opportunity for us to continue working together beyond the degree show, and by nature of it being open we were free to get involved and help shape it. We will now hand over to Neil and Corrado to give you more background on the Congress itself...

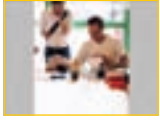


# Open Congress

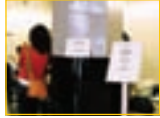
Neil and Corrado talk briefly about Open Congress



**Slide 17.** Welcome to Open Congress. As you heard from Trevor and Ian, some of us at Chelsea (mostly students, but some staff and researchers) became interested in collaborative art practice, - in issues of access and participation, organizational structures, the impact of digital technologies, and social exchanges like generosity and friendship.



**Slide 18.** We recognized that these themes provide tools to enable us to think through the conventions of art's authorship, its ownership and distribution; they give us a critical purchase. (NB what is a 'critical purchase'? - a way of holding or gripping something, with curiosity and critique in mind.....)



**Slide 19.** Many of these themes seem to connect directly to what we knew of the development of Free/Libre and Open Source software – FLOSS - and more generally copyleft licensing and the Free Culture movement. So we began to wonder if, and how, these FLOSS development methodologies could map onto or into the creative practice that we were interested in. So a core group began to research, convene and discuss.



**Slide 20.** We began to see how issues of collaboration, self-organization, ownership, access and participation were emerging in all manner of cultural practices. We learnt about initiatives calling for open-source democracy, 'open' law and knowledge projects, about 'open' organizational and business models.



**Slide 21.** We realized that it would be disingenuous - yet again - to separate art and its institutions off from these

other social forces and processes, so we tried seriously to mesh with and engage our research where we recognized parallel or related drives.



**Slide 22.** In April 2004, we approached Tate Britain

with the idea of a conference using FLOSS as its starting point. We made an internal bid to the Research Committee at Chelsea College of Art for funding. We were eventually successful and secured £10,000 to support the project. In January 2005 we set up our website Open Congress using [1] free suite of tools, and we started a wiki.



**Slide 23.** Through using the wiki, we began to engage with a wider related community, both on and off line. We also began to mesh with other organizations that were using a similar suite of software tools and shared similar themes. We became attached, related to and inspired by Season of Media Arts London [SMAL] - soon to become node.London - and learnt enormously from the collaborative student initiative that Ian and Trevor described chelseawiki.



**Slide 24.** There was a powerful moment when at one meeting it dawned on us that it would be disingenuous to organize a conference about issues arising from FLOSS

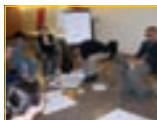
development without consistently and ethically embodying them - we should also conduct ourselves in an open, transparent and accountable way. So, this is where it got very, very exciting, but rather messy.



Slide 25. We used guidelines from a website [openorganizations.org](http://openorganizations.org) on how to practice as an

'open' organization. We tried to learn to be open, transparent and accountable in all we did, to devolve decision making, and use the notion of 'rough consensus' to make those decisions. We evolved the idea of holding public meetings - meetings 'open' to anyone who got to hear about them at places in London like the Royal Festival Hall, a private members club, a studio, an exhibition, a café at Chelsea, etc.

And we started to try and post all details, agendas, meeting notes and action points on our wiki, so we could build a collaborative record, for all to see, of the process we were actively engaged in.



Slide 26. At these large and lively, or small and intimate meetings we began to draw up lists of possible participants and to generate themes of related interests

that could help us structure our conference; these began to coalesce as Governance, Creativity and Knowledge.

And we began to think of them as ecologies, as meshed networks of participants and resources. We also realized that a conventional academic form of conference - famous speakers, passive audience - was inappropriate for our content, we needed something much more open and participatory.

The collaboratively-developed conference became a congress with multiple strands, with simultaneous talks, presentations and workshops.



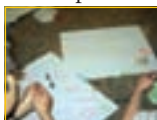
Slide 27. The other side was our interface with our

partner, Tate Britain. Tate's role slowly withdrew from actively developing the congress (except for the media department) to being its infrastructural host. Overworked Tate staff slipped into cruise control and with all their experience set about organizing a conference, with Critical Practice as the content provider.



Slide 28. In June 2005 we were beset with scheduled demands to meet Tate print deadlines with lists of confirmed speakers, technical needs and conference packs. What we actually had at that moment was a swirling mass of possible participants nominated through our wiki, an innovative structure with multiple strands in different locations in the museum and a decision making process that was (at times) indeterminate.

Tate's top-down management hierarchy needed us to fit a template, and we couldn't. We probably appeared badly organized and incapable of meeting deadlines. Actually we were differently organized and, when deadlines loomed, acted with enormous collective energy and precision. This made our relationship - with the best will in the world - difficult and fraught for both parties.



Slide 29. In July 2005 we began to invite people from our wiki-generated participant lists.

Some were self selected, others had made proposals, and some had been collaboratively nominated, many were international.

How could we divide the budget to accommodate these differences?

Whom should we pay?

And who should decide whom to pay?



Slide 30. At one astonishing meeting, where we were struggling to agree on how to allocate our financial

resources equitably, we decided to post our then total budget on-line, on our wiki.

It sort of worked, but many ethical questions still haunt us, some of which we addressed at the ResourceCamp (also part of Disclosures 2008).

As the congress loomed, the mismatches of organization practice between Tate, ourselves and sixty or so individuals became ever more apparent.

Although what also became clear is that 'open' organizations are exceptionally good in a crisis.

Wireless London, with internal support from the Tate on-line curator (who also in-kind sponsored webcasting and archiving most of the congress events) networked all the relevant Tate spaces simply and without fuss.

The formerly SMAL had become Node.London and with Cybersalon and Open Congress shared international speakers, technology (for the October season of events), and raised additional funds.



Slide 31. Throughout the organization of Open Congress we tried to conduct ourselves in an open, transparent and accountable way, and we failed on many

accounts. Much of our organization was shambolic, many of our invited participants felt the effects of this as we struggled with deadlines and schedules, and some invited institutional participants withdrew.

Our interpretation of this is that certain institutionalized individuals need fairly constant reassurance of who they are dealing with, and a familiar structure into which they will fit. Something we were not able to provide.



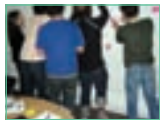
Slide 32. But the opposite and much more positive effect is

that many participants self organized, invited others, curated their own panels within the congress structure, proposed workshops and installed stalls in the Clore Gallery Foyer at Tate. We organisers of Open Congress, became Critical Practice.

Organizing and developing a project using FLOSS-inspired practices was a very sharp learning curve, and (mostly) a thrilling process. A conference became a congress, ideas were genuinely contested and developed, and there was no audience, only participants...

# Historicisation

Marsha and Michaela address the historicisation of Open Congress, and the emergence of Critical Practice



Slide 33. In what ways is an engagement with Open Congress emblematic of our current age of participation?

What is the relationship between the participation propelling Critical Practice's collaborative enterprise, and recent developments in technology and culture?

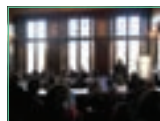


Slide 34. There are many ways to address these two questions.

We could, for example, expand on Ian and Trevor and Neil and Corrado's reflections and discuss Critical Practice in relation to Web 2.0 technologies, arguing perhaps, that the group's "wikification" demonstrates general trends in social networking technologies.



Slide 35. Or, we could situate Critical Practice in what curators and critics like Claire Bishop and Maria Lind have called "the social turn" and "the collaborative turn" respectively.



Slide 36. We could say that projects like this one

— like the cluster's participation in Disclosures — aptly demonstrate the ways in which artist groups are using social situations to produce dematerialized, anti-market and politically-engaged projects - projects that champion the old avant-garde edict to merge art and life.



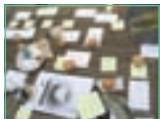
Slide 37. Alternatively, we could locate Critical Practice in relation to new media (forward slash) media studies.

We could discuss the group's interest in digital technology, not so much as an end in itself — not because we are mystified by pressing buttons or laying cables — but because by using new technologies as tools for collaborative art making, we also seek to understand the new and unexpected ways in which these forms are shaping subjectivity.



Slide 38. Certainly, these are all useful vectors for understanding Critical Practice within our current cultural context. But instead of further exploring any one of these foci, we would like to take a slightly different approach and address our personal relationship to and

understanding of participation as creative practice in Critical Practice. In particular, we would like to discuss the intersubjective space created through our collective participation and how it operates as THE MEDIUM for creative production within the group.



Slide 39. How can we discuss our identities as second generation Critical Practitioners and research students at Chelsea?

How have we "received" Critical Practice?

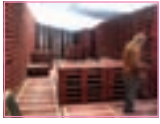
By way of osmosis?

By way of intimations and tacit practices?



# More recently

Cinzia and Robin address the most recent phase of Critical Practice, in relationship to art institutions

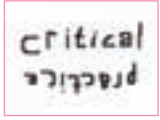


Slide 40. What questions were left open by Open Congress?  
The answer seems to be 'all of them'. Critical Practice has its roots in these questions and in finding ways to keep asking them. Some of us discovered Critical Practice through the Node.London list in 2006, when they "staged" the Atelier Trans Pal event in the courtyard of Chelsea College.



Slide 41. This event had not been pinned down, because its form and content were being contested live and in real-time  
This remains a core quality of Critical Practice – a capacity to activate situations in which it is possible to think together - to be critical and to be self-reflective, through an understanding of OPENNESS.

Or, as Robin put it: 'Being self-reflective is our excuse to allow the event to collapse.'



Slide 42. While the personnel and organizational structures partly changed, the 'name' Critical Practice has been around for a few years. This gives credibility to our 'brand'. It is good to be recognizable - especially when dealing with large institutions such as universities, Tate or big galleries ...



Slide 43. But then again we do not want to be as recognizable a brand as, say, Chanel. 'Fame' would be counterproductive, as it makes it easy to be instrumentalised - and it would ruin our

'reputation' in more critical circles like here.



Slide 44. We want to be taken seriously. But in trying to fulfil certain obligations - either

existing or perceived ones - of the institutions we work with, there is a danger of self-subduing. In our anticipation of institutional expectations, we might be in danger of becoming an institution like those we are working with.



Slide 45. To keep a more radical

image, we would prefer to think of ourselves as a bunch of pirates. Making contracts and treaties with big Empires and small shipping companies, but only as tactical elements in our bigger plans :) We work together only on the basis of a set of guidelines, retaining the subversive unpredictability of a random



crew. Slide 46. We ARE an institution as we institute practices. We try to

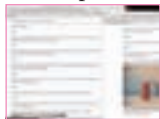
be sensitive to issues of self-governance in order to remain a healthy organisation. Soon after Atelier Trans Pal, Ian led an Open Organisation workshop, where we explored in depth the Open Organisation guidelines and found ways of inhabiting them.



Slide 47. Perhaps we could identify the workshop as a re-articulation of our WE.

We remain a fluid cluster, with some members flowing in and out. The Open Organisation guidelines remain guidelines, not a structure we fit into. We try to nurture this openness and sometimes we find more playful ways of asking questions.

In the unforgettable Song Workshop led by Mister Solo, we used the process of trying to compose and perform a Critical Practice song as a catalyst for self-reflection.



Slide 48. In a number of ways, the Aims and Objectives are the backbone around which the cluster functions and they are themselves always in the process of being revised.



Slide 49. As we are constantly in the process of re-negotiating our

working practices, and remain open to any new collaborator in our network, rather than an institution, we strive to be more like Pippi Longstocking's gang, which sometimes consists of just Pippi, or also her two best friends, but is always open to one more kid joining the action and sometimes their adventures involve all the children of the village...

On the wiki: <http://criticalpracticechelsea.org/wiki/index.php/Introduction>



# Critical Practice and Me

Sourced from Robin Bhattacharya

Lately I was nominated for (and then won) an award for young Swiss artists :)

I had the opportunity to present one new artwork of which I am the 'author' in a large collective exhibition during Art Basel 2008. But, as I was writing an artist statement I realised that I am unable to talk about "my" artistic development, without talking about Critical Practice...

I have been working with and as part of Critical Practice since 2005, 'joining' in the middle of the process of organising Open Congress. At the same time, I organised with other students discussions that eventually grew into the series of events collide/COLLABO, which also became connected with Critical Practice. The boundaries of the fields of activity were, and are not that clear to me. And so I see Critical Practice and me as intrinsically connected: not only in the sense that Critical Practice projects and events are an expression of the kind of work I do/like to do, but also because my experiences with Critical Practice have radically changed my way of working in everything I am involved in. I participated in the live-public writing of our Aims and Objectives (and because they are wikified and flexible, I can change them at will. Even now!). For me, these Aims and Objectives are more than a set of guidelines, they are an aspiration, an expression of ideals - which I anyway inhabit - and therefore strive to fulfil in any environment I happen to be. While not having to 'abide' to them, like you abide to a law.

## Personnel

In the Critical Practice session during collide/COLLABO, when we worked on the Aims and Objectives live and in public, I talked about the organisational structure. I tried to make an example of the squat<sup>[1]</sup> I used to frequent back in Berne: anyone present in the building at any one time was a 'member' of the 'organization', and responsible for its running.

This fluidity of personnel, and the ensuing transferability of Critical Practice has always fascinated me - the possibility that people working towards the same Aims may be using different Objectives, or a different language altogether, and that this might still constitute 'critical practice'.... When I made the comparison to a bunch of pirates or the gang of Pippi-Longstockings, during our Brechtian introduction at Disclosures, this is the kind of flexibility I had in mind.



[1] I am referring to Reithalle - in the mid 90s. You could bring your own food to the restaurant, stay overnight if you were from far away... The IKUR (Interessengemeinschaft Kulturraum Reitschule, i.e. the The Community of Interested in the Reitschule) was defined as the persons present in the building... Of course there was a general assembly where few showed up and decisions were made and most believed that group to be the IKUR, though really they were the IKUR themselves.

# Critical Practice and Other Nodes

When working within other networks, or even on my own I feel an un/willing 'representative' of Critical Practice: as the projects we do together stay in my mind, and inform my practice and conduct. I try to feed into these new networks as much as possible from our experiences. In such moments for me Critical Practice is more of a mindset, and I become an embodiment of CP... Now I know this sounds eerily scary, and smells of brainwash – but maybe I don't mean mindset, more of a pair goggles, which you can choose to wear, or not!

Now I am also a member of Greenpeace, but sometimes I am a bit more peaceful and a bit greener than other times - only that this isn't reflected in my membership status. As long as I pay my membership fee. The big difference is that, as a co-author and editor of the Aims and Objectives I feel much more of an obligation to them, than towards some pre-set party line.

When working within the Manifesta 6 (M6DIII) network in Berlin or in Cyprus, I noticed that many people shared similar ideals to Critical Practice – especially, the importance of keeping culture in the public domain. Many cultural operators realise we cannot afford to make compromises regarding accessibility, environmental sustainability etc... And if I have to compromise, at least I become reflexive of my mode of working, in relation to our Aims and Objectives, or rather, my ideals.

For my latest exhibition in Basel, I worked alone - as I am the only Swiss National amongst us - and I had to show my 'personal' work. This obviously doesn't exist, as I usually make collaborations in networks like Critical Practice. So I see my work 'The ROBIN™ currency' as an appropriate answer to the context of an art-competition where I am 'valued' personally as an author. In exchange for the value that Critical Practice has added to me as an artist over the years, I promised to donate a ROBIN™ (the sum of which is to be negotiated at a future CP meeting). In this way, I try to reflect the complex collaborative value exchanges that take place in "my" - and really all - artistic production. Even if it is obscured by the nature of authorship-based structures, such as national competitions.

In working away from CP, I almost always am extending CP, becoming myself a node of connection in my relations to other personnel. And as other parts of CP are doing the same, each one of them is extending the network and bringing it into other fields (art, theory, games, economics, IT, cooking).

But writing, talking, discussing with CP, travelling around, meeting people and talking with them and hearing how they share similar ideals - in some cases they'd even heard about CP - and seeing how our idea(l)s are reflected even on other points of our society, more distant to me – I find myself extremely happy to be embedded in a mental mindset that permeates groups, scenes, organizations, nations and fields of practice – how could I then be lonely? Even if in some case I might actually be alone in executing a specific project, if I can see its role in practically establishing a criticality, I am working together with 'millions of participants'.

Mike Reddin's stall *Economics of consensus and information*

attracted and maintained the attention of some passersby who seemed reluctant to engage directly with the Market. Mike invited people to consider ethical ways in which we should, and could "pay for things". On offer was a choice of five ethical questions to explore, starting with a 'medical dilemma' designed to find out what value we bring to situations of resource-choice. Encouraging participants to ask for further pieces of information, Mike tried to elicit the common ground which people bring to such decision making – or see if they could come to common decisions via very different routes. To fully participate in the transaction meant investing deeply held beliefs and unveiling personal values.

In the *Waste Proposal Unit*, Mike Knowlden invited participants to discuss their habits of domestic food consumption and wastage, considering the void of waste as a potential resource, from which both economic and non-economic value might be recovered. The stall functioned as a site of initial discussion and exchange, a web of conversations in which strategies for dealing with leftovers were aired. Lists of these foods, nascent recipes and approaches then formed an inventory of possibilities. The project's second stage was enacted at the Outpost Gallery in Norwich where Mike, along with Josh Pollen, spent a day creating recipes inspired by the source material of the market. The resultant food was provided free to the gallery's visitors. This development provides the



# Reflections on the Market of Ideas

Coordinated by Isobel Bowditch and Trevor Giles

Reflections by Cinzia Cremona

## *The London Festival of Europe 2008 How to Make Europe Dream? A Cultural Congress, 15th and 16th March 2008*

12.30 - 7pm, The Banquet Hall and the Red Room, Chelsea College of Art & Design, London.

*London is potentially a heart for a European cultural avant-garde. It is one of the most culturally active and cosmopolitan places in Europe. Yet it is also the capital of what is often portrayed as being one of the most Euro-sceptic of nations. As part of the London Festival of Europe 2008, European Alternatives will invite the most innovative of young European cultural organisations, artists and writers to London for a Congress on the future of artistic culture in Europe.*

The Congress featured four round tables and two public evenings over two days.



# Some notes on the process

If you google the philosopher 'Bernard Steigler' you are directed to David Barison's amazing film *The Ister*, you can click-through to the website of Thinking Through Practice, a project connected with Critical Practice and co-ordinated by Isobel Bowditch and Andrew Cheshier. The organisers of the London Festival of Europe 2008 Niccolò Milanese and Lorenzo Marsili did indeed google 'Bernard Steigler' and followed the link to Critical



Practice. We eventually became a partner in the The London Festival of Europe 2008, hosting philosopher Bernard Stiegler's inaugural lecture *Towards a European Way of Life and How to Make Europe Dream*; a Cultural Congress.

Within Critical Practice, open-organizational guidelines and wiki technology inform a peer-led approach to cultural production. Self-selected Working Groups take responsibility for tasks, projects or events. Those who wish to be involved convene to make decisions through rough-consensus - participation is fluid, often creating difficulties in tracing the collaborative processes, as a fluid 'we' is a complicated entity. Following the decision to host and contribute to the The London Festival of Europe 2008, we struggled with ideas of 'Europe' and our relation to this concept as cultural producers. One possibility was to refocus a previous project, *Beyond The Free Market (BTfM)*, which researched the ramifications of capitalist economic policies for food production and consumption. Through its investigation of waste and food politics, BTfM had already grappled with the dynamic micro and macro effects of European policies. But within Critical Practice, there seemed to be a more general interest in finance, economies, ecologies, and how they are enacted - a powerful undercurrent that shaped our eventual contribution to the Congress.

We invited some economic 'experts' for dinner to discuss some of the possibilities offered by our patchwork knowledge of economics and economies. Federico Campagna and Mary Robertson unravelled with us some fundamentals of 'classic' and 'alternative' economical

basis for resources that are being collated at the Waste Proposal Unit page on our wiki.

Facilitated by Marsha Bradfield with the help of Mary Anne Francis, Kelly Large, Katrine Hjelde, Jem Mackay and Helena Capkova, [the reFRElements Café](#) provided a place/space for delegates and marketers to sit and chat. The Café was also a focal point for Ecoes, a collaborative video project that uses Actor-Network Theory to explore the Market of Ideas as a web of heterogeneous interests. Project facilitators Jem and Marsha circulated through the market, talking to marketers, delegates and visitors about their experience of the event. Since the Market, Ecoes has coalesced into a dynamic working group. Through face-to-face meetings, email exchanges and online forums, Jem, Marsha, Cinzia, Michaela and Corrado are developing collaboratively edited documentation of the Market, an exhibition and panel discussion for the Networks of Design conference (Falmouth, September 2008) and a full-blown research investigation on the implications of Actor-Network Theory.

For the [Economy of Emotions](#) stall, Cinzia Cremona (with the help of Davina Drummond) offered a thought experiment of sorts, which required each 'visitor' to invest in a momentary personal relationship. Asked to select their favourite TV advert, participants were invited to explore the emotions, feelings, needs, desires and ideas it evoked for them. The thought experiment consisted in 'converting' these emotions from needs

waiting to be fulfilled (passive) into a form of capital for each individual to invest into productive activities (active). A paper bow was handed out to materialise the currency of the emotions and to assist the transformation of needs from abstract, induced feelings to concrete, owned resources. This has prompted an ongoing discussion about the bow's carrier function within a network of elements, and on how some participants have emotionally invested in their bows.

Trevor Giles developed the **Well-being** stall with think-do tank the New Economics Foundation. Their 'Happy Planet Index Calculator' provided the impetus to reflect on personal well-being and to speculate on economies of well-being, both national and personal, rather than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and prosperity. Visitors were invited to test their happiness using a short test devised by Ed Deiner and information on **Basic Income** was used to introduce the issue of moral responsibility toward basic human need within developed societies.

Katelyn Toth-Fejel took inspiration from the '70s permaculture movement for her **Permaculture, Permaculture** stall. The permaculture movement was started in Australia to impart holistic systems thinking into agriculture. Katelyn operated a mobile dyeing station using natural techniques and materials to alter available items.

For his intervention-stall, Tom Trevatt placed a stack of A2 prints of an image of **Bilawal Bhutto**, the son of Benazir Bhutto and heir to

systems, and Federico ultimately participated in the event itself. Between the dinner and the following meeting, the image of a non-competitive market began to form.

## What is cultural about economics? A Market of Ideas

Markets are good at convening and distributing resources. Based on the model of the ancient bazaar, our non-competitive market constituted an experiment in the co-production and distribution of knowledge. Critical Practice invited artists, anthropologists, economists and others to activate 'stalls' distributed throughout the grand banqueting hall of Chelsea College of Art and Design. This enabled the previously passive congress audience of the London Festival of Europe to become a noisy milling crowd, animatedly transacting knowledge and experience. The Market of Ideas challenged the lazy institutionalised model of knowledge transfer - in which amplified 'experts' speak at a passive audience - and offered instead an engaged and distributed peer-to-peer exchange within the congress.

The project has its theoretical roots in Bruno Latour's performance of Actor-Network Theory. According to Latour, connectors are the vehicles that carry the 'truth condition' of association. They are not external binding conditions, but composites of individual behaviour. From this point of view, we imagined economies and culture as connectors, and our market as a composite of composites.





## The Market

A linear description can barely convey the complexity of the event. Makeshift units of tables and chairs constituted points of activity - the 'stalls' - animated by a variety of individuals, technologies and intentions. The tools that mediated the transactions ranged from post-it notes to data projectors, posters to hair driers, screen-printing to coffee, and lap-tops to recipes. Whilst some roamed and filmed, others moved from stall to stall, engaged and transacting.

## On Reflection

The Market of Ideas left stall holders and participants with the general feeling of a rough and interesting rub between the Congress and the Market itself: the Congress seemed to dream Europe via well-rehearsed theoretical assertions about the other in the form of experts, panels and passive audience, whereas the Market embodied a generous, peer-to-peer co-production of knowledge and experience. Two very intense hours gave everybody a taste of the potential of the Market-format, but not enough space to unravel the ideas put forward in each stall. The time constraints and some lack of thought to the aesthetics of the stalls were the source of some frustration for some participants. Nevertheless, the Market seems a successful form for knowledge production and exchange, and could be usefully deployed for other ideas, themes and projects.

her title, on the floor near an 'unmade' stall. Henry Proctor paid Getty Images for the right to produce the posters. He was contracted to certain limitations regarding its distribution: the image has a print run limited to 10,000; it may only be distributed for one month and must not be reproduced digitally. On the reverse of the print was an outline of the contract. As the month license was already expired at the time of the Market, any distribution of the image broke Proctor's agreement with Getty - the image is activated legally as well as politically. The moment the unguarded image is picked up, Proctor will have broken his agreement with Getty, and the person taking it will then become complicit in a crime. The 'stall' put into question the nature of exchange, the position of the 'customer', the marketplace itself and how one negotiates the language of commerce and freedom of information.

Offering a more traditional interpretation of the link between commercial transaction and exchange of ideas, Robert Dingle invited a professional **Barber**, to engage customers in meaningful conversation as he shaved them and cut their hair. Maintaining the tradition of serving only gentlemen, Daniel disappointed many eager visitors and, in true Actor-Network spirit, highlighted how some transactions are directed by external factors.

**Debt** was a stall manned by anarchist and anthropologist David Graeber, perhaps best known for his book *Towards an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. For the

Market, David evolved a draft 'typology' of some 24, mostly non-commercial, social transactions. The typology was used to structure exchanges about the possibility of transactions without incurring debt, or of investing without regard for a future return.

Joe Balfour with economists Federico Campagna and Francesca Papa contributed the very lively *Corporation, comm, The perverse pleasure of mixing community and business*. The stall proposed to discuss the A B C of a new approach to social economics: the mix of Artists, Business and Communities. This meant connecting the Artists Placement Group's assimilation of 'socially engaged practice' by art institutions, with @TMark and Netart's tactical use of corporation tools enacted by bottom-up communities, and a new perspective in marketing – that a social community can act like an entrepreneur, as in the example of Parkour. The dialogue is continuing at <http://www.corporationdotcomm.blogspot.com>.

In *Economics Through Imagery – An Associative Approach*, transactions focused on how the present circumstances of participants can be translated and made visible through the logic of accounting. Through the means of pastels and black paper a conversation takes place. What is 'an invisible hand', a 'national economy' or a 'market force'? Arthur Edwards worked with passers-by to explore perceptions of economics derived from the imagery of graphs, words and mantras, and the values inculcated through their repetition.

As Critical Practice, we have benefited enormously from working within an open format like that offered by the market/bazaar. We were stimulated to reflect on the nature of 'competition' and on how the stalls and Ideas competed for the attention of the milling crowd. This connected beautifully with Bernard Stiegler's warning in his lecture – that to pay attention is a way of investing in, or nurturing the object of your attention.

We convened a few days after the Market for an informal debriefing session, which, with hindsight, we wish we had structured more rigorously. Enthusiasm and deadlines pressed us to move on to our next commitment; a Brechtian presentation (see p.2) and *ResourceCamp* for Disclosures (see p.20) only a week after the London Festival of Europe. The structure and themes of the *Market of Ideas* and the *ResourceCamp* echo one another, both events enabling the heterogeneity of Critical Practice to be truly productive.

Confident in the potential of the non-competitive market format, Critical Practice aims to develop the idea further into an independent event with more attention to the aesthetics of the stalls and more time to transact. Some suggestions are included in the list of *Big Ideas for 08/09* (see p.25)

On the wiki: [http://criticalpracticechelsea.org/wiki/index.php/London\\_Festival\\_of\\_Europe](http://criticalpracticechelsea.org/wiki/index.php/London_Festival_of_Europe)



# On Association

Trevor Giles and Cinzia Cremona

An attempt at thinking through some of the ideas presented by Bruno Latour in the lecture *Another European Tradition: traceability of the social and the vindication of Gabriel Tarde* at the London School of Economics (LSE) in February 2008. The ideas seemed to resonate with the informal reasoning for a Market of Ideas (see p.13)

If, with Latour, we look at what is generally described as the 'social' as a process of 'association', then culture, as one of a number of connectors - religion, law, science, technology, politics, organization, fiction, etc - is performative. Culture produces associations and 'subjects in progress' (Julia Kristeva) in the act of producing itself. Rather than an entity (or something more than the sum of its parts), think of 'the social' as a composite, a collective comprised of component monads (individuals). In other words, "the whole is never bigger than the part, but is the part itself expressed in a certain intensity and connected differently" (Latour, as accurate a quote as possible). From a scientific and philosophical point of view, the 'structure' of associations is an effect of distance - a perspective. The closer we look, the more clearly we can discern the actors and mediators that transform the composite. [1] Moreover, Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) understands 'structure' as a verb, not as a noun, as the process is never completed - the figurations of associations remain temporary and in flux. Also, 'distance' can be "distance in time as in archeology, distance in space as in ethnology, distance in skills as in learning." (Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* 2005 p.80)

Within Critical Practice, we appreciate the value, reflected in Latour's position, of a perspective that shifts back and forth between the composite/collective and its components. "An actor is also always a network." (John Law, *Notes on the Theory of Actor Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity* 1992, p.4). This is one aspect of the process of self-reflection we sought to enact within the London Festival of Europe and its approach to culture.

Culture is empowered in some sense to be whatever it does. When we enact economics and culture in relation to each other, we reflect the complexity of the reciprocal effects of economics, culture and a variety of connectors at work [2]. This activity is not lost on economists who, according to Bruno Latour, and also Tim Harford, for various reasons tend to work with models rather than practice or evidence

[1] Within this composite of 'the connected' each monad (individual) is performative, determined by its connections, layered competences, and the great number of characteristics one integrates from one's environment. Moreover, Latour considers his 'actor' to be a placeholder for 'actor-network': "An actor-network is what is made to act by a large star-shaped web of mediators flowing in and out of it. It is made to exist by its many ties: attachments are first, actors are second." (Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* 2005 p.217) Within Critical Practice we could interpret these components as values binding individuals.



(empirically flawed as science). Analysing this within the field of anthropology of economics, Donald MacKenzie suggests that markets are therefore performative - made by economists through the performance of values - and thereby produce values, cultures and economics through their temporary figurations.

Differing models of economy are informed by differing values. Transposing this to culture, is it necessary to propose Ideas in an effort to influence the structure of the composite? If culture is a network of associations, of ideas in constant flux<sup>[3]</sup>, do we as cultural practitioners (and other 'monads') experience a similar agency to that of economists? This discussion provided the background to our engagement with the London Festival of Europe and our Market of Ideas.

According to Latour, connectors are the vehicles that carry the 'truth condition' of association. <sup>[4]</sup> They are not external binding conditions (as sociologist Emile Durkheim thought), but composites of individual behaviour. From this point of view, we imagine our market as a composite of composites. Each stall can be quite different, with some based on activities a bit like the Value Game <sup>[5]</sup>, through which information can be experienced directly, experimentally, without really knowing what conclusion one will come to.

On further reading Latour: "A culture is simultaneously that which makes people act, a complete abstraction created by the ethnographer's gaze, and what is generated on the spot by the constant inventiveness of members' interactions." (Reassembling the Social, p 168) In other words, 'culture', 'economy', 'the context' and 'fields' are some of those shadowy phantoms that, like the 'social' are nowhere to be seen, but are said to account for our coming together. The Market of Ideas could be seen as an experiment on how these phantoms are materialised in our associating and, at the same time, how they can be refreshed by injecting different practices into more 'traditional' activities (such as the model of a congress).

[2] The continual crossing over of values leads to a confusing slippage between the 'roles' of any of these characters, where an element of the theory can be component, composite or connector. This may be because the situation is so fluid and difficult to consider as a static moment. Probably the reason economists model.

[3] Thinking through the agency of the individual - what can one do? - would locate some of the value of the Market. If individuals appreciate themselves through external associations, they may consciously change and strengthen any particular social 'connector'.

[4] From Wikipedia: In semantics, truth conditions are what obtain precisely when a sentence is true. So, Latour may mean that associations are only true if they can be traced to/through vehicles - that is connectors or mediators.

[5] The Value Game was developed by Mary Anne Francis for a Between, an event at the South London Gallery in April 2007. You can find out more about it in Critical Practice: Issue 1 or you can watch a video documentation online: [http://www.archive.org/details/Critical\\_Practice\\_Between\\_608](http://www.archive.org/details/Critical_Practice_Between_608)



# Budget Guidelines for Open-organizations

Filtered and condensed by Neil Cummings

## Introduction

Critical Practice participated in an event called Disclosures on the 29th - 30th March 2008.

*Disclosures sought to scrutinize the notion of openness across different fields of cultural production. In many ways Disclosures aimed to extend discussions developed by NODE. London (2006) and Open Congress (2005).*

It was organised by Anna Colin and Mia Jankowicz of Gasworks.

On Sunday 30th March Critical Practice convened a *ResourceCamp* to tackle the 'elephant in the room' of open organizations - money, its 'open' management, and more generally the transparent distribution of resources.

BarCamps, from which *ResourceCamp* took its inspiration, are an international network of self-organized, user-generated unconferences — open, participatory workshop-events — often related to open source methods, social protocols, and open data formats. Sessions are proposed and scheduled each day by attendees, typically using white boards, paper taped to the wall, pens and a timer. Everyone is encouraged to present for about 20 minutes with time for questions, observations and exchange.

Anyone can initiate a BarCamp, using the BarCamp wiki for guidance.

Critical Practice is an open organization, although we prefer the term self-organised

cluster, because we use guidelines suggested by open-organizations.org. We do this because we recognise - after Theodor Adorno - that all art is organised, so how we organise has to be part of our 'critical practice'. The Open Organizational guidelines are fantastic, practical, pragmatic, born from participation and analysis of previous Open Organizations - like Indymedia. They stress process and functionality, although to our knowledge in none of the online documents is there any mention of money or resources, and how to value and manage them.

This is often what Critical Practice struggles with most - how to manage our finances and more generally our values and resources. Perhaps this is a struggle we share with most art organizations, NGOs and self-organised groups - organizations that function in mixed economies of funds, fees, volunteers, generosity, grants, etc. We do not have, and would never have, enough money to pay people for their participation. And much of what we value - creativity, conviviality, knowledge, experience, etc. - is difficult to quantify and reimburse.

We convened the *ResourceCamp* to start the process of drafting guidelines for open resource management.

We had contributions from: Kuba, Neil, Corrado and Marsha, Peter, Anna, Cinzia, Trevor, Ian, Eileen & Ben, Jem, and Marcell.

Video documentations of all of them are available online at swarm TV

## Draft Guidelines

Oscar Wilde, in *Lady Windermere's Fan* has Lady Windermere say "The cynic knows the price of everything and the value of nothing."

This is a draft set of guidelines for individuals and organizations trying to practice in an 'open' way. They are explicitly intended to facilitate the open, transparent and accountable management of financial resources, and how they inevitably mesh with human, social, intellectual and material resources too!

## General principles

### Purpose

At all times, but especially at the beginning of a project, try to be clear about your specific aims and time-frame.

### Simplicity

The more complicated resource management is, the less likely it is to be well managed.

### Flexibility

The resource management process should be flexible; resources and needs will change, frequent reviews are helpful.

# Guidelines

1 Organize resource allocation around clearly articulated tasks, services, needs, specific people, goods or projects - bearing in mind these are subject to continual review

2 For each project: a) Estimate/allocate the appropriate resources  
b) Estimate/record all the incomes (investments)  
c) Estimate/record all the expenditure  
d) Total your income and expenditures  
e) Review  
f) Make adjustments as necessary

3 Invest for future gain, and try to build resources for others.

4 Respect and evaluate different forms of income and expenditure - obviously nothing is 'free'. And perhaps think of a 'total audit' of personal (and collective) intellectual and emotional investment, time, energy, materials and space that make a project possible - the opportunity costs.

5 Appointing a resource coordinator is useful.

6 Be transparent with the available financial resources; publish the financial resources (e.g. on a wiki) and clearly describe the process by which participants can access the funds - i.e. through the resource coordinator.  
You could refer to our Budget\_Tables as templates.

7 Be clear who has permission to act, and who is empowered to make decisions - rough consensus is good. Try to avoid the big other of hidden power and responsibility.

8 Public transparency should guard against misuse and corruption.

9 Consider each case for funding, or demand upon resources, in their own right. Precedents, although useful can be deceptive.

10 Use resource management as a plan for future action.

11 Use points of friction as opportunities for reflection and change - changes in practice and to the guidelines themselves.

12 Take responsibility, and do not look to apportion blame for the mistakes of others, especially the big other or the resource coordinator.

13 There is no intrinsic value, so be sensitive to the sacrifice - the opportunity cost - implicit in one choice over another.

# Project budget table

Name of the project:\*\*\*\*\*

Agreed and available budget: £XXX.

Deadline for claims: XX/XX/XX.

	Total Budget:	EX		
Person	Need	Amount	date claimed	date paid
Name	details	EX	date	date
Name	details	EX	date	date
	Total of requests:	EX		
	Total remainder:	EX	Open/Closed	

## Notes

1. 'Date claimed' - this should refer to the date on which you submitted your claim.

2. It will really help us keep track of our cash flow if you can let us know when you have been paid by completing the Date Paid field.

3. The comments box can be used to explain e.g. why a payment might be overdue (for example, went missing in the post).

## How to claim:

State your need in the form above and describe method of contact - email, skype, etc. Contact Coordinator, or post to discussion page. If you need the funds advanced, it may be possible. See Budget page for details.

# Annual budget table

Because Critical Practice receives funding from Chelsea College of Art and Design, we adhere to their accounting timetable, which runs from 1st August to 31st July. To close the financial year, all invoices and expenses are to be submitted by 20th June. Costs incurred after the 20th June will be reliant upon Critical Practice's subsequent financial standing. Funding allocations are made on 1st August of each financial year.

## EXPENDITURE: 21st June Year- 20th June Year+1

Who's Claiming	Date of claim	Description of claim	Amount £	Date Paid	Comments
Name	date of claim	description	£	date paid	
Name	date of claim	description	£	date paid	
Name	date of claim	description	£	date paid	
Name	date of claim	description	£	date paid	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	-	-	EX	-	-

## INCOME: 21st June Year- 20th June Year+1

Who's Paying	Date of income	Description of income	Amount £	Amount €	roll-over
Name	date	description	£	€	
Name	date	description	£	€	
Name	date	description	£	€	
Name	date	description	£	€	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	-	-	EX	€X	EX

On the wiki: [http://criticalpracticechelsea.org/wiki/index.php/Draft\\_budget\\_guidelines](http://criticalpracticechelsea.org/wiki/index.php/Draft_budget_guidelines)



# Well-being as a theme

Wrestled by Trevor with Neil, Cinzia and Marsha

*“We want to begin to redefine “wealth” and “progress”: to judge our systems and economies on how much they create the world we actually want, rather than how much money they generate.” - Centre for Well-being, New Economics Foundation (NEF).*

Since the *Between*<sup>[1]</sup> ethics and issues of value have continued to inform and antagonize our work. Our engagement with these themes has proved exciting, providing a critical basis from which to resist the cold logic of finance. It has enabled us to begin to tease money apart from the transactions embedded in our FLOSS-inspired approach to cultural production.

The root of Economics is in ‘household management’. Through the current environmental discourse we might recover its use from finance and shift our reading from an insular (or protectionist) ‘care of the home’ to an interdependent ‘care of the self’ (see p.18). Here our work seems to overlap with NEF’s address to the ethics of capitalism and market economics. They are a think-and-do tank focused on political and economic changes that engage with the needs of people as communities and by implication the welfare of the planet<sup>[2]</sup>. They contend that orthodox economics measures the wrong things. As Critical Practice has explored through recent projects such as *ResourceCamp* (see p.20) and the *Market of Ideas* (see p.13), measuring the right things is not easy. The qualitative value of a good, service, experience, or mode of participation is difficult to quantify. Accounting for money fails to reflect the true cost and full benefit and misses important elements to individual and organisational well-being, such as happiness, security, personal development and freedom.

This spirit of ecological accounting is interesting to us, but we are wary, for fear of expanding the reach of capital. At the *Between*, it was observed that when something is measured it is absorbed into the logic of capital. So perhaps identifying but not necessarily quantifying the multiplicity of intangible resources is the way to proceed.

Philosopher Bernard Stiegler states<sup>[3]</sup>, to pay attention is to take care, psychic and social care of the object of attention. This paying of attention, as investing without interest, bridges a personal economy and links to an ethic of social and political agency. ‘Well-being’ sums up much of what we feel to be essential in sustaining self-organised activity. It has evolved into something of a preoccupation, a common thread throughout our activity of the last year, and the ground from which to build over the next.

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[1] In April of 2007 Critical Practice worked with O+I (formerly the Artists Placement Group (APG) and Kit Hammonds to stage a *Between* (a downtime event between exhibitions) at the South London Gallery. See Critical Practice: Issue 1.

[2] See <http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org>, an action-planning tool which enables people to explore together how their local economy works and to develop ideas for improving it.

[3] In the opening lecture of the London Festival of Europe 2008, philosopher Bernard Stiegler explored what it is to pay attention. He suggested that there is a war being fought over attention by neo-liberal commercial interests and a civil society.



# Big Ideas for 08/09

Summary coordinated by Marsha Bradfield. Co-authored by Cinzia, Trevor, Neil and Marsha

Throughout the past year, Critical Practice has responded with enthusiasm to a number of invitations and opportunities to contribute to art, its discourses and organization. From *Systems Art* at the Whitechapel, to the London Festival of Europe and on to Disclosures, these engagements have provided stimulating contexts for practising critically. Although undoubtedly invigorating, the downside of this close attention to the immediate 'event-in-hand' has often left us feeling challenged in terms of commitment, good will and responsibility.

While we intend to remain engaged for the coming year, it feels important for Critical Practice to develop some self-initiated projects which, like our founding event *OpenCongress*, are indispensable in terms of the cluster's sustainability. We started the ball rolling at our Annual Picnic on the 26th June in St James's Park London. Seven people met, each bringing food, drink and three Big Ideas. We plucked one another's suggestions from a blue fedora (one Big Idea arrived by text message) and discussed their connections, alternatives, feasibility, and possible figurations. Two broad categories of activity emerged:

1. Short-term focused events
2. Longer-term research projects

## Contents

### \* 1 Long Term

- o 1.1 Sustainability
- o 1.2 'World' Cultural Summit
- o 1.3 Found a political party
- o 1.4 Downtime
- o 1.5 CP and the Institution
- o 1.6 Deschool or Self-School
- o 1.7 Market of Organisations
- o 1.8 Free Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS)-inspired Actor Network Theory (A-N-T)
- o 1.9 Audit
- o 1.10 Open Source festival

### \* 2 Short Term

- o 2.1 How to publish your own book
- o 2.2 24 hour retreat
- o 2.3 A (temporary) Critical Practice shop
- o 2.4 A call for proposals
- o 2.5 Pay people to delete web content
- o 2.6 Marathon
- o 2.7 Testing Budget Guidelines
- o 2.8 More Pecha Kucha
- o 2.9 Self-organizing Big Brother
- o 2.10 Portrait of CP
- o 2.11 Declarations

## Enthusiasm

We reconvened on the 10th July at 7pm in the foyer cafe of Royal Festival Hall, London to decide how to develop our Big Ideas. The Enthusiasm index emerged as a means of gauging the level of commitment among Critical Practitioners: their dedication to seeing an idea through to completion – enthusiasm with responsibility. Low numbers do not necessarily indicate a lack of interest. Rather, they signal a lack of commitment to realizing the proposed project. It will be interesting to see how closely these scores relate to what transpires (see Prediction Markets).

## \* Long Term Projects

### Sustainability

How can we sustain the activity that makes Critical Practice what it is – a reflexive structure for collaboration? Should we strive to maintain the cluster's basis of 'free' work? Self-organising groups tend to run on generosity and good will, often leading to exhaustion and 'burn-out'. In what ways can art be subject to the discourses of sustainability (energy, resources, materials, but also generosity and volunteering)?

*Enthusiasm: 38/42 (7,7,7,5,5,7)*

Our interest in sustainability resonates with other themes and ideas, like wellbeing. It also links to an emergent interest in Care of the Self (Michel Foucault). We will wrest the term away from New Ageism and Green Capitalism by widening the scope of what is perceived as productivity.

### 'World' Cultural Summit

What's unfair about the way things are in the "world(s) of culture"? What do people owe? In other 'disciplines' (science, engineering, design), the

financially successful invest time and money in the 'institutions' to which they feel indebted – schools, universities and research institutions. To what extent does culture (latterly the Cultural Industries) succeed or fail in this? Do commercial galleries, art dealers and wealthy artists 'skim' profit from the public domain, expropriate its creativity and resources?

The proposed gathering of cultural and other organizations (galleries, museums, auction houses, artists, agents, NGOs, charities, etc.) will consider the more equitable distribution of resources. How do/might/could these organizations (re)invest? How would this (re)investment promote sustainability?

*Enthusiasm: 13/42 (2,2,2,4,3,0)*

### Found a political party

Stand for election in our local constituency of Westminster, London. We would need a manifesto. The RAQS Media Collective offers a useful alternative i.e. a negotiable statement of intent. Tent States It's a form of 'flash politics' in need of a location.

*Enthusiasm: 0/42 (0,0,0,0,0,0)*

A little too demonstrative and without any real need.

### Downtime

To make use of downtime: office space, galleries, space, time, goods (cars, laptops, tools), services and skills, expanding on the Between and surplus labour such as [recaptcha.net ReCAPTCHA]. Our interests here overlap with Sustainability and relates to O+I's recent proposal to reanimate Betweens.

Caution: avoid driving increased productivity when identifying these spaces. When it comes to skills and people's downtime, be mindful of necessary pauses to avoid an increased risk of 'burn-out'. Think efficiency rather than productivity.

*Enthusiasm: 32/42 (5,6,5,5,6,5)*

Seen as a component of Sustainability and the emergent 'Care of the Self'. Also useful in identifying 'resources'. How to recuperate individually/organizationally?

## CP and the Institution

CP as a "virus" in temporary occupation of a museum/gallery/business/other - institution.

How do we articulate our relationship(s) with art institutions? Is the 'biology' of collaboration a useful metaphor for exploring these interactions? Should we select a host rather than accept to an invitation to be hosted?

Symbiosis comes to mind, an exchange of mutual benefit rather than destructive self-interest. Neil offered the example of sourdough bread; Trevor proposed the idea of the phage. These examples of "occupation" involve optimising conditions through ongoing negotiation between the host and hosted.

*Enthusiasm: 33/42 (6,5,6,5,5,6)*

What emerged from our discussion was the term/concept The Biology of Collaboration, an idea that gained considerable enthusiasm when aligned with Sustainability.

## Deschool or Self-School

A project inspired by the deschooling ideas of Ivan Illich and a FLOSS

approach to learning and cultural production. "Deschooling" is a counter instrumentalisation (or at least self-instrumentalization) tactic that promotes self-directed learning in contrast to the production of "willing workers". Moreover, taking responsibility for one's own education raises awareness about A) the choices one makes and B) the implications of these choices.

Reportedly 80% of what goes on in the classroom is discipline and control. Is this the main lesson of school? What's the difference between schooling and learning? Illich suggests that learning is more effective when learners learn what they want to, but is this really practical?

Home schooling, Rousseau's *Émile*, Maria Montessori and Rudolph Steiner are all mentioned.

*Enthusiasm: 8/42 (0,1,1,2,2,2)*



## Market of Organisations

A convening that borrows the structure of the Market of Ideas, itself modelled on Modes of Organization.

Invite groups to exchange knowledge and experiences about their logics of internal organization - e.g. art organizations (public museums and

galleries, commercial galleries, auction houses, independent spaces, research groups, academies, Mute and other publications, self-organised groups, etc.), commercial enterprises (corporations, family businesses, cooperatives, legal studios, etc.), political associations (parties, unions, public bodies, alternative associations, communes, squats, flash mobs, lobbies, 'movements', etc.) and others beyond our present imaginings. Think institutional critique: pragmatic research to unmask the dynamics of power, bloodlines, cliques, Guilds, mutual societies and so on.

*Enthusiasm: 30.75/42 (7,6,3,5,4,5.75)*

## Audit

Have we done what we set out to do? Have we done what we think we have done? The Critical Practice wiki contains many valuable resources. Could an audit transform these into assets and if so, then what?

In our general cultures of audit (finance, audience figures, etc), we often focus on quantity rather than quality. But are we accounting for the "right" values?

This audit would be part self-reflection and part critique of cultural, immaterial, or knowledge economies. Cinzia's personal economy - in particular, her attempt at a personal balance sheet (an audit of all incomes and expenditures), and the ResourceCamp exemplify a deep and meaningful auditing process. The benefits of such models include shifts in perspective enabling us to make better decisions about CP's value(s).

*Enthusiasm: 16.5/42 (2,2,1,4,4,3.5)*

Might be a component of Sustainability



## Free Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS)-inspired Actor Network Theory (A-N-T)

Develop a context for exchange between a few distinct communities (possibly international) with a view to exploring social(ising) technologies (e.g. common.org, open-organizations.org, eipcp.org, Gasworks, Timebank). Through self-documenting and self-mapping, we might model a FLOSS-inspired culture.

*Enthusiasm: 7/42 (1,0,0,4,1,1)*

We're already trying to do it.

## Open Source festival

Festivals are generally 'in aid' of something and celebrate their content. To go beyond these two facets and celebrate the means as much as the benefits could be a productive rally, we propose something that convenes cultural practitioners and prosumers around an open source approach to life in general. Longer and more productive than a conference, in a relaxed setting (or commons) - part ResourceCamp, part OpenCongress, part retreat.

*Enthusiasm: 7/42 (0,0,3,2,0,2)*

Too similar to Open Congress; already explored at Open Source City.



# \* Short Term Projects

## How to publish your own book

Publish a book on how to publish your own books.

*Enthusiasm: 1/42 (1,0,0,0,0,0)*

We already have quite a few resources on publishing.

## 24 hour retreat

A 'generative' experiment in human behaviour: 24 hours together without food, sleep, computers, phones, books, newspapers or radios to develop research using only pens, pencils, paper and our collective and embodied knowledge/intelligence.

What are the possibilities of doing this as a kind of squat in public space? What about camping on the new "landing strip," the green space in the Chelsea parade ground? Would it be interesting to "retreat from the world" by making an exhibit of ourselves in an art institution?

Concerns: Is going hungry really desirable - or even ethical given our access to food? Also, in what ways does this project affirm the stereotype of the artist as a tortured soul who embraces discomfort in the name of inspiration?

*Enthusiasm: 26/42 (0,0,7,7,5,7)*

## Self-organizing Big Brother

Ten people commune for ten days with ten video cameras. Each day each person makes a ten-minute video diary.

*Enthusiasm: 3/42 (3,0,0,0,0,0)*

Ahm, no thank you.

## Testing Budget Guidelines

Critical Practice might calibrate its draft budget guidelines by identifying relevant organizations and play-testing these recommendations for best practice. This could be performed as a Between. Additionally/alternatively, we could explore the idea of a total "profit" and "loss" account of a year's activity. This relates to auditing.

*Enthusiasm: 29/42 (7,5,4,4,5,4)*

## Marathon

Interested members of Critical Practice should "creatively" run a marathon.

Could this public activity provide a platform for alternative forms of engagement? We could stage a situation/intervention in this public event while wearing CP tracksuits...

*Enthusiasm: 5/42 (0,0,3,0,0,2)*

## A (temporary) Critical Practice shop

Explore ideas of exchange and value in a Critical Practice shop by using a form like the Market of Ideas. We could mine Critical Practice - its knowledge, experience, skills, resources and wiki - for 'goods' and seek to realise their value through forms of exchange.

*Enthusiasm: 12/42 (0,3,4,1,4,0)*

## A call for proposals

A call for proposals from artists interested in collaborating with Critical Practice.

*Enthusiasm: 0/42 (0,0,0,0,0,0)*

## More Pecha Kucha

Do more with the Pecha Kucha form. Pecha Kucha is a mode of presentation that originated in Japan, and asks 20 people to show 20 slides (about their interests) for 20 seconds a slide; Pecha Kucha is Japanese for ‘the sound of conversation.’

This could be useful for forging links with other organizations.

*Enthusiasm: 10/42 (0,0,3,2,2,3)*

## Pay people to delete web content

This year, more data will be produced than in the last 40 years combined. Much of this results from the ease of producing and sharing content through digital delivery. This has implications for the value ascribed to so-called “cultural content.” This value could be tested by inquiring at what price (of course this is only fiscal value) people would agree to delete a portion of their content forever.

*Enthusiasm: 0/42 (0,0,0,0,0,0)*

A bit cynical/futile and almost impossible to implement.

## Portrait of CP

A reflexive, complex and carefully considered portrait of CP (in print or otherwise), within which we all, individually at first, follow Robin’s example and unpack our own different relationships and positions in Critical Practice.

*Enthusiasm: 35.5/42 (6,7,7,6,5,4.5)*

This is a resurrected interest in an Elevator Pitch workshop, a previous proposal of the Social Relations working group.

## Declarations

A short series of short email “declarations”, fragments of a manifesto, etc. A format of 1 of 10 has proved effective for SwarmTV. This could be a tool for Social Relations. Supporting technologies include Pageflakes, RSS feeds and other means of aggregating cluster activity, references and interests.

*Enthusiasm: 31/42 (7,6,6,4,4,5)*

We appear to be well intentioned towards a few Big Ideas, but we are committed to taking forward:

### *In the long term*

- \* Sustainability
- \* Downtime
- \* CP and the Institution refocused as The Biology of Collaboration
- \* Market of Organisations

### *In the short term*

- \* 24 hour retreat
- \* Testing Budget Guidelines
- \* Portrait of CP
- \* Declarations

## On the wiki:

[http://criticalpracticechelsea.org/wiki/index.php/Big\\_Ideas](http://criticalpracticechelsea.org/wiki/index.php/Big_Ideas)

## Critical Practice includes

Joe Balfour  
Robin Bhattacharya  
Dr Isobel Bowditch  
Marsha Bradfield  
Dr Andrew Chesher  
Dr Wayne Clements  
Cinzia Cremona  
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Trevor Giles  
Mike Knowlden  
Jem Mackay  
Corrado Morgana  
Wei-Ho Ng  
Dr Tim O'Riley  
Michaela Ross  
Tom Trevatt  
Neal White  
Manuela Zechner  
in addition to those participants  
registered to our wiki and mailing list

## Partners

Chelsea College of Art and Design  
European Alternatives  
Future Archive  
Gasworks  
ICFAR  
New Economics Foundation  
Open-Organizations.org  
Thinking Through Practice

## Critical Practice: Issue 2

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# Crit-i-cal |'kritikəl|

[f. L. critic-us (see CRITIC a.) + -AL]

ORIGIN mid 16th cent. (in the sense [relating to the crisis of a disease]): from late Latin **criticus** (see **critic**). (Oxford American Dictionaries)

FUNCTION **adjective**

‘relating to, or being, a state in which a measurement or point at which some *quality*,<sup>[1]</sup> *property*,<sup>[2]</sup> or *phenomenon*,<sup>[3]</sup> suffers a definite change’ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

1. expressing comments or judgments: *Some members were critical*<sup>[4]</sup> *of the body's decision to proceed given the...*

- Criticality can be maintained. (Or can it?) It is reflective, vigilant, persistently aware, (self) conscious, a series of moments repeated over time. *He aspired to greater criticality because...*

2. (of a situation or problem) having the potential to become disastrous; at a point of crisis: *It was getting late, discensus seemed inevitable, the situation became increasingly critical and...*

• or

It is the moment of **crisis**, a disturbance, a feeling of unease articulated through the body, a watching and waiting: *About noon, however, she began—but with a caution—a dread of disappointment which for some time kept her silent...to fancy, to hope she could perceive a slight amendment in her sister's pulse;—she waited, watched, and examined it again and again;—and at last....* (*Sense and Sensibility* J. Austen)

3. **Critical Practice**,<sup>[5]</sup> critical thinking as a practice: *Biology of collaboration,...*

- Not a duality (*Critical against Practice*), not linear progress (*better Critical, better Practice*), no certainties (*we have been so Critical in our Practice...*), but experiments, openness, reflections, collaborations, trust, shared language, shared actions.

4. **Mathematics & Physics** relating to or denoting a point of transition from one state to another:

- (of a nuclear reactor or fuel) maintaining a self-sustaining chain reaction: *The reactor is due to go critical after...*

**Synonyms:** ANALYTICAL, CAPTIOUS, CARPING, CENSORIOUS, CRUCIAL, DECISIVE, ESSENTIAL, EVALUATIVE, EXPLANATORY, EXPOSITORY FAULTFINDING, HYPERCRITICAL, IN-THE-BALANCE, INTERPRETIVE, KEY, PARAMOUNT, PICKY, SERIOUS, RISKY, PERILOUS, VITAL

**Antonyms:** COMPLEMENTARY, SAFE, UNIMPORTANT

**Comment:** Chains of meaning are braided through time and through overlapping vocabularies – from Greek and Latin etymologies, via medieval renaming, Renaissance (re-births), re-illuminations, and more recent medleys.

**Comment:** We want to undo familiar perceptions of criticality and posit new hybrids. We recognize the uncertainty of Critical illness, the urgency of Critical Care, the judgement of Critical Thinking within our embodied Critical Practice.

**Comment:** Criticality is contingent, responsive and site specific. Critical Thinking may involve a literal approach in one context, a figurative approach in another and/or a combination of these and other approaches under different circumstances.

**Comment:** If Practice is embodied in collaboration, Critical Practice is more practical than idealist. It is dynamic, moving from certainty to uncertainty.

**Comment:** 'Critical' in a Google search brings up Critical illness insurance. Criticality is something sudden, created by the demands of the moment the point before the outcome when life hangs in the balance.

**Comment:** Criticality differs from other forms of practice involving repetition. This is because Critical Practice is more about deconstructing assumptions than perfecting a skill.

**Comment:** Criticality can be maintained over time. As Practice follows Critical follows Practice in an accumulation of understanding, the slippage of actions that provoke unease with what we thought we knew keeps us moving.

or  
In collaboration, like members of a body, we are dislodged out of our certainties. We compromise on (my for yours, your for mine) criticality, to stimulate further reflection.

[1] Is criticality a quality, an essential characteristic of a person or approach?

[2] Is criticality a property, a trait that can be adopted (or abandoned) at will?

[3] Is criticality a phenomenon, an observable event?

[4] Criticality as the censoring of oneself and others: how can criticality be generative rather than restrictive, and is this best achieved by using the 'crisis' definition of critical or an alternative notion emphasising its ongoing, reflective nature?

[5] But what is 'Critical Practice'? How productive is habitual criticality? How do we move from Critical to Practice? How do we shift into Critical Praxis? What is embodied criticality?